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MARVEL® COMICS GROUP
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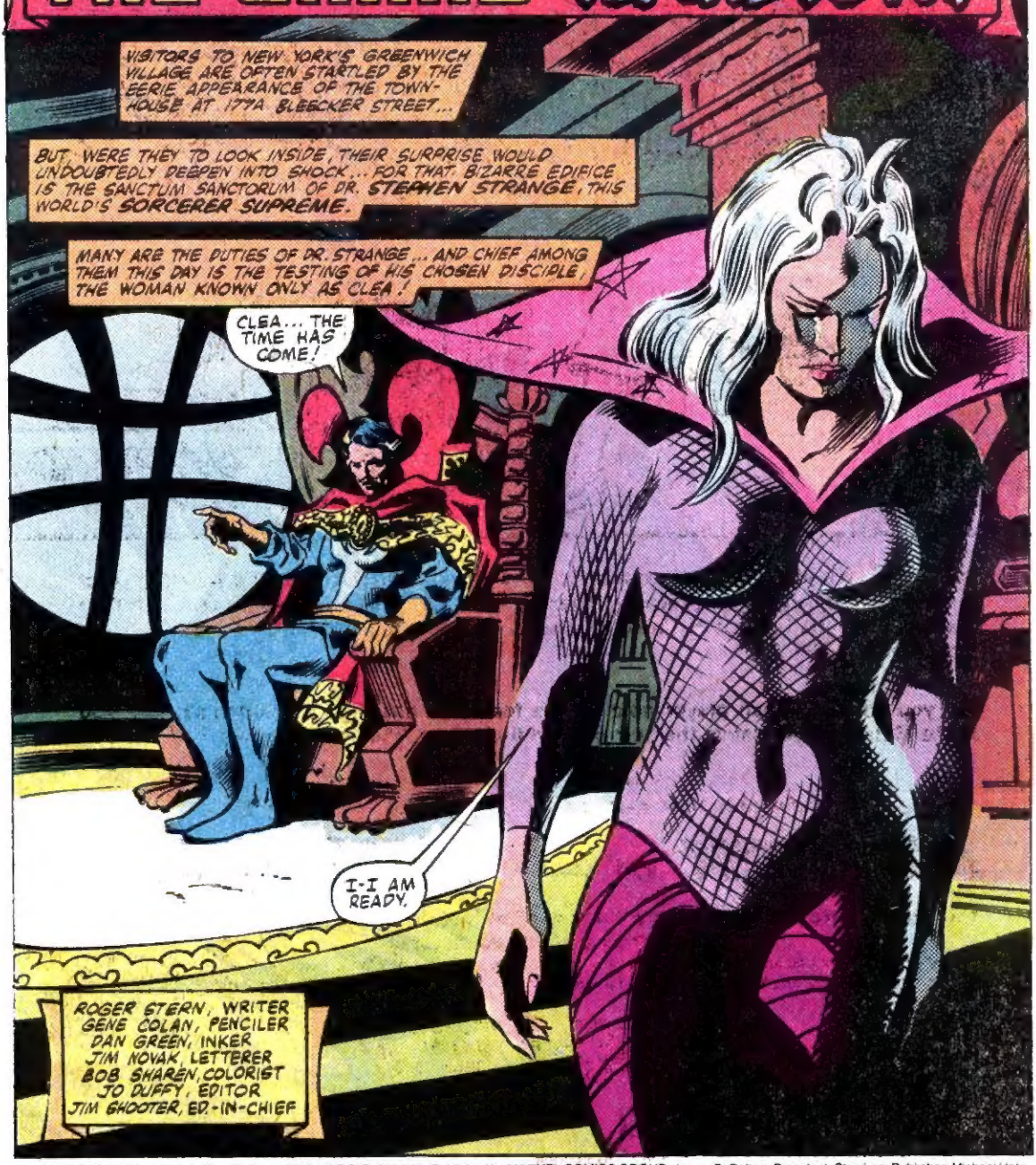
DOCTOR STRANGE®
MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS
DR. STRANGE BATTLES
IKONN...
LORD OF ILLUSIONS!

Once he was a man like most *others*— a *worldly* man, seduced and jaded by *material* things. But then he discovered the *separate* reality, where *sorcery* and *men's souls* shaped the forces that shape our *lives*. In that instant, he was *born again*, to become a man like no other!

STAN LEE PRESENTS: DR. STRANGE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!™

THE GRAND ILLUSION!


VISITORS TO NEW YORK'S GREENWICH VILLAGE ARE OFTEN STARTLED BY THE EERIE APPEARANCE OF THE TOWN-HOUSE AT 177A BLEECKER STREET...
BUT, WERE THEY TO LOOK INSIDE, THEIR SURPRISE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY DEEPEN INTO SHOCK... FOR THAT BIZARRE EDIFICE IS THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM OF DR. STEPHEN STRANGE, THIS WORLD'S SORCERER SUPREME.
MANY ARE THE DUTIES OF DR. STRANGE... AND CHIEF AMONG THEM THIS DAY IS THE TESTING OF HIS CHOSEN DISCIPLE, THE WOMAN KNOWN ONLY AS CLEA!
CLEA... THE TIME HAS COME!
I-I AM READY.
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DOCTOR STRANGE™ Vol. 1, No. 47, June, 1981. (U.S.P.S. 426-910) Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Galton, President, Stan Lee, Publisher, Michael Hobson, Vice-President, Publishing, Milton Schriffman, Vice-President, Production. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 575 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES. Published bi-monthly. Copyright© 1981 by Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All rights reserved. Price 50¢ per copy in the U.S. and Canada. Subscription rate $6.00 for 12 issues. Canada, $7.00. Foreign, $8.00. Printed in the U.S.A. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. DOCTOR STRANGE (including all prominent characters featured in the issue), and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are trademarks of the MARVEL COMICS GROUP. Postmaster: Send address changes to Subscription Dept., Marvel Comics Group, 575 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022.

VERY WELL, THEN... IN A RECENT BATTLE, YOU CALLED UPON THE RINGS OF RAGGADORR TO AID YOU AGAINST TWO DEMONIC GARGOYLES.* THUS, YOU DEFEATED YOUR FOES... BUT YOUR CONJURATION WAS ILL-FORMED...
...INCOMPLETE! THEREFORE, YOUR TEST FOR TODAY WILL BE TO SOLIDIFY ALL SEVEN OF THE MYSTIC RINGS... IF YOU CAN!
*ISSUE #44 -- JO.
FOR AN INSTANT, CLEA FLINCHES AT THE HARSHNESS IN THE MAGE'S COMMAND--
--BUT ONLY FOR AN INSTANT. THEN, THE FAITHFUL STUDENT IN HER TAKES OVER, SUPPRESSING THE THOUGHT THAT HER MASTER IN THE MYSTIC ARTS IS ALSO THE MAN SHE LOVES--
--AND CONCENTRATES SOLELY ON HER SPELL!
BY BOUNDLESS FORCES BEYOND THE NORM--
--BY POWERS THRICE AND FOUR! LET LOOSE YOUR ENERGIES AND FORM THE RINGS OF RAGGA-DORR!
FOR A SECOND, THE ROOM SEEMS TO DARKEN, AS BRILLIANT BEAMS OF LIGHT ARC FROM THE WOMAN'S GLOWING PALMS IN ANSWER TO THE SWEET SONG OF HER INCANTATION!
HIGH OVERHEAD, AT THE INTERSECTION OF THOSE BEAMS, THERE SWIFTLY FORMS A LUMINOUS, ELDRITCH CYLINDER...
...A CYLINDER WHICH SUDDENLY BREAKS APART--
--INTO SEVEN PERFECT RINGS OF MAGICAL FORCE!
PLEASED WITH HER SUCCESS, CLEA ALLOWS HERSELF TO BE CAUGHT UP IN THE MESMERIZING GLORY OF THE SPELL...

...AND THAT IS NEARLY HER UNDOING!
THOUGH IT PAINS ME TO ACT WITH TREACHERY, I MUST LAUNCH A MYSTIC ATTACK ON CLEA! ONLY BY MAINTAINING THE RINGS UNDER THE MOST CONFOUNDING OF SITUATIONS CAN SHE TRULY PASS THE TEST!
NOW, DISCIPLE--LET US SEE HOW WELL YOUR SPELL ENDURES WHILE UNDER ASSAULT FROM THE VAPORS OF VALTORR!
THE SILVER-HAIRED SORCERESS-IN-TRAINING (MMED)-ATELY RECOVERS FROM HER MOMENT OF WEAKNESS, SPEAKING NOT A WORD--
--BUT DIVERTING A MINUTE PORTION OF HER CONCENTRATION TO A THOUGHT OF COOLING BREEZES.
AND THEN, BY MAGIC, THE WINDS OF WATOOMB ERUPT FROM HER LEFT HAND--RAPIDLY DISPERSING THE INK-DARK VAPORS!
A VERY GOOD RESPONSE! BUT HOW SHALL YOU FARE--
"--AGAINST THE CRIMSON BANDS OF CYTTORAK?"
STEPHEN--NO! NOT THAT!

CLEA'S ATTENTION SHATTERED BY THE CLOSING, CONSTRICTING BANDS, THE DARK BLUE RINGS DISINTEGRATE IN AN INSTANT--
--RELEASING A MYSTIC BACKLASH WHICH SWEEPS OVER THE YOUNG ADEPT, ENVELOPING HER IN A NIMBUS OF BLINDING LIGHT...
...EVEN AS STRANGE DISPERSES THE CRIMSON BANDS!
ONCE THE SPELLS ARE OVER, THE ROLES OF MASTER AND DISCIPLE ARE DROPPED--AND THEN, FOR THE BRIEFEST OF MOMENTS, THEY ARE AGAIN BUT MAN AND WOMAN.
OH, STEPHEN! STEPHEN, I'VE FAILED YOU AGAIN!
FAILED? NOT AT ALL, MY DEAR!
YOU UNDERESTIMATE YOURSELF. YOU HAVE PASSED THIS TEST WITH COMMENDABLE SKILL.
I MYSELF FARED LITTLE BETTER WHEN I WAS SO TESTED BY MY LATE MENTOR, THE ANCIENT ONE.
I... PASSED? BUT HOW? ONCE YOU PRESSED YOUR ATTACK, I LOST ALL CONTROL OVER THE RINGS!
THAT IS BECAUSE YOU ARE BUT THE STUDENT... WHILE I AM THE TEACHER! STILL, YOU MANIPULATED THE RINGS CORRECTLY, FAR BEYOND THE TIME LIMIT I HAD SET FOR YOU AT THIS STAGE OF YOUR DEVELOPMENT.
AND YOU RECOVERED FROM THE MYSTIC BACKLASH ALMOST IMMEDIATELY!
TRUE, YOU MUST WORK AT IMPROVING YOUR CONCENTRATION--BUT YOU PASSED THIS TEST WITH FLYING COLORS. NOW, DRY YOUR EYES...
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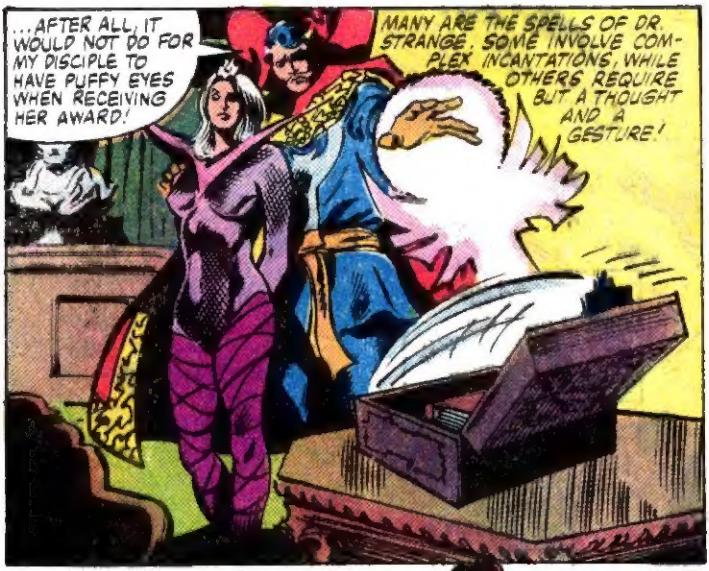
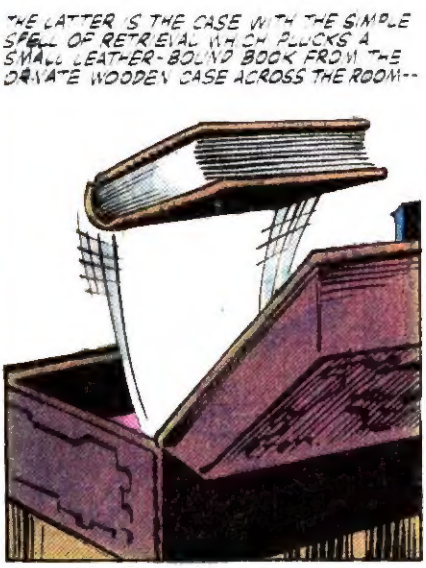
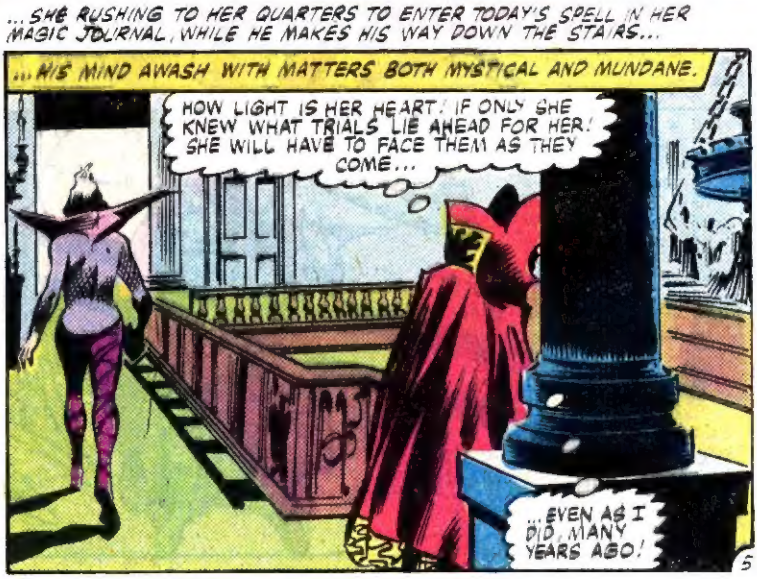

...AFTER ALL, IT WOULD NOT DO FOR MY DISCIPLE TO HAVE PUFFY EYES WHEN RECEIVING HER AWARD!
MANY ARE THE SPELLS OF DR. STRANGE. SOME INVOLVE COMPLEX INCANTATIONS, WHILE OTHERS REQUIRE BUT A THOUGHT AND A GESTURE!


THE LATTER IS THE CASE WITH THE SIMPLE SPELL OF RETRIEVAL WHICH PLUCKS A SMALL LEATHER-BOUND BOOK FROM THE ORNATE WOODEN CASE ACROSS THE ROOM--

--AND BRINGS IT FLYING TO THE MASTER'S HAND!
CLEA, YOU ARE ABOUT TO ENTER THE SECOND STAGE OF YOUR TRAINING IN THE MYSTIC ARTS...
...THUS, THE TIME HAS COME TO PRESENT YOU WITH YOUR OWN BOOK OF SPELLS!

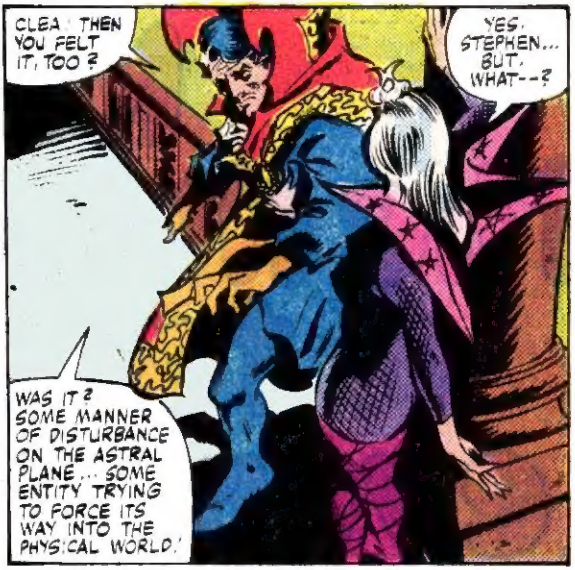
--YOUR OWN GRIMOIRE IN WHICH TO RECORD YOUR SPELLS AND INCANTATIONS AS YOU LEARN--OR CREATE--THEM.
STEPHEN, I...

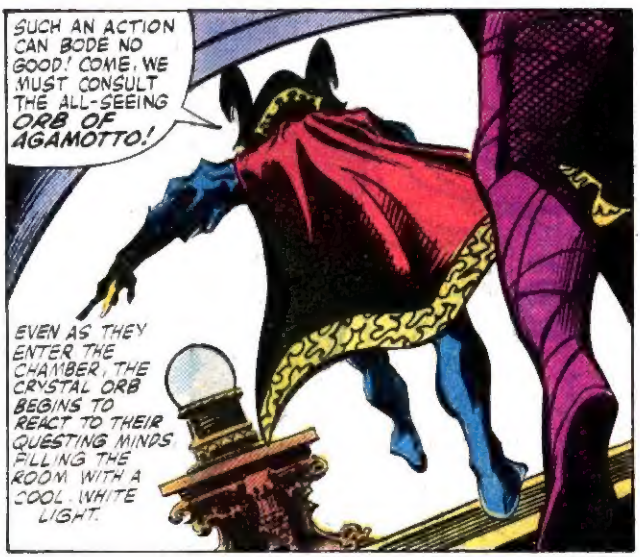
...I DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO SAY!
THEN SAY NOTHING, BELOVED. NO WORDS ARE NECESSARY.
CLEA NODS, UNDERSTANDING--AND THE TWO DEPART THE CHAMBER.

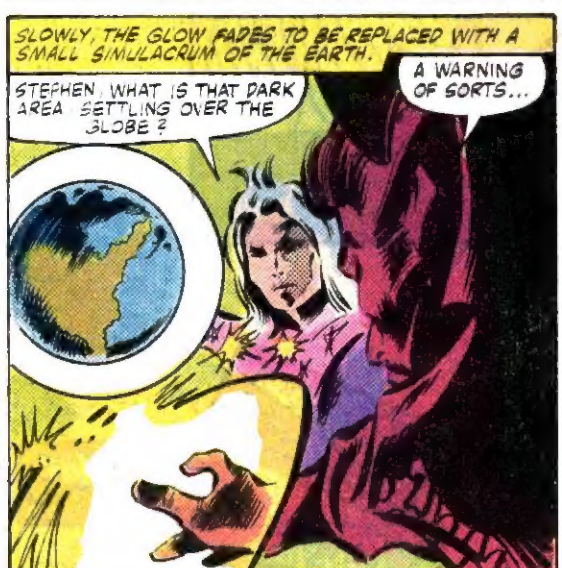

...SHE RUSHING TO HER QUARTERS TO ENTER TODAY'S SPELL IN HER MAGIC JOURNAL, WHILE HE MAKES HIS WAY DOWN THE STAIRS...
...HIS MIND AWASH WITH MATTERS BOTH MYSTICAL AND MUNDANE.
HOW LIGHT IS HER HEART! IF ONLY SHE KNEW WHAT TRIALS LIE AHEAD FOR HER! SHE WILL HAVE TO FACE THEM AS THEY COME...
...EVEN AS I DID, MANY YEARS AGO!

AND, AT THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS...
BUT, MS. WOLFE--!
TRY TO UNDERSTAND, WONG--STEPHEN HIRED ME TO HANDLE HIS BUSINESS AFFAIRS!
NOW WHAT?
ALL I'M ASKING IS A LITTLE COOPERATION!
GOOD MORNING, SARA... WONG! IS ANYTHING THE MATTER?
STEPHEN, COULD YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN TO WONG THAT I'M NOT TRYING TO USURP HIS POSITION?
ALL I WANT HIM TO DO IS GET RECEIPTS FOR WHATEVER ITEMS HE PURCHASES FOR YOU.
I'LL NEED THOSE RECEIPTS TO MAKE SURE YOU GET ALL THE TAX BREAKS THAT ARE DUE YOU!
AS I WAS ABOUT TO EXPLAIN, MS. WOLFE--I SHALL BE MOST HAPPY TO PROCURE YOUR RECEIPTS--
--BUT SOME OF THE POTIONS AND MATERIALS THE MASTER REQUIRES FROM TIME TO TIME... WELL, THEY ARE CERTAIN TO RAISE SOME EYEBROWS AT THE I.R.S.
TEA, MASTER? MS. WOLFE?
HAH-HA! YES, THANK YOU, WONG!
WONG HAS A POINT, SARA. I THINK YOU'D BETTER CHECK WITH ME BEFORE WE CONFUSE THE GOVERNMENT WITH DEDUCTIONS FOR INCENSE OR EYE OF NEWT.
I... SEE. I HADN'T THOUGHT OF THAT.
MASTER? IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE TEA?
EH?
OH... NO, WONG. THE TEA IS FINE... BUT SOMETHING--SOMEWHERE--IS MOST DEFINITELY NOT!
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME!

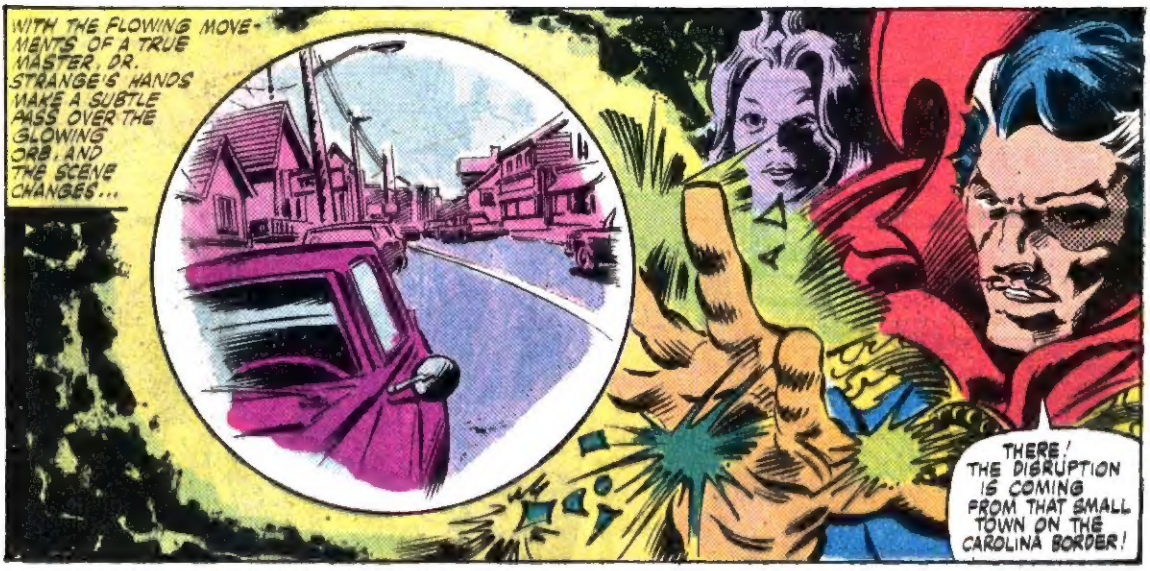
STEPHEN?
SHH! MS. SARA... IT IS BEST NOT TO DISTURB THE MASTER WHEN HE IS LIKE THIS. OVER THE YEARS, I HAVE LEARNED THAT WHEN DR. STRANGE BECOMES SO PREOCCUPIED--
--THERE IS LITTLE ORDINARY MEN CAN DO TO HELP!

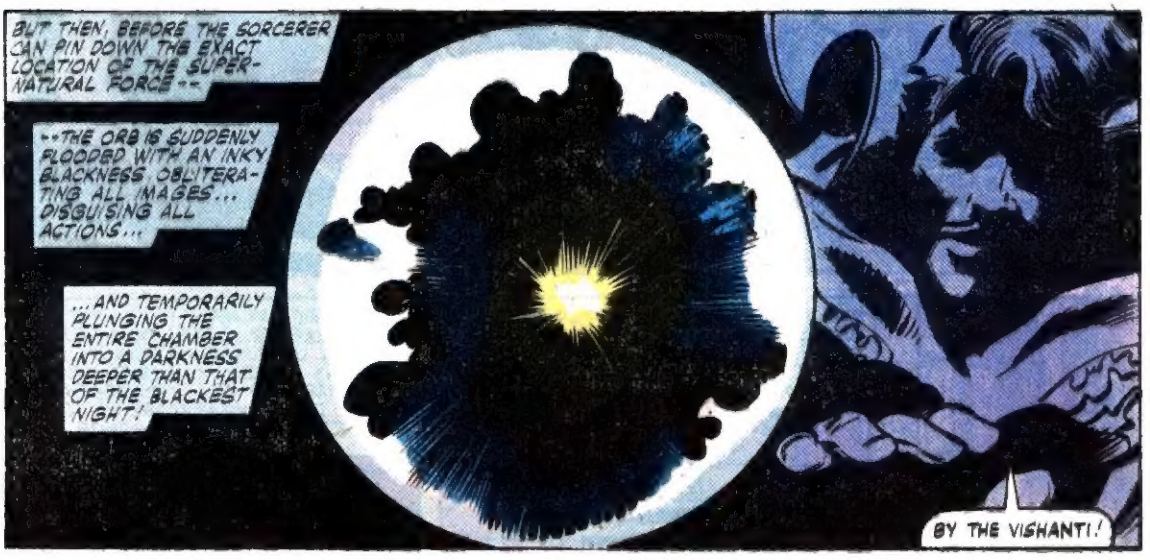

CLEA! THEN YOU FELT IT, TOO?
YES, STEPHEN... BUT, WHAT--?
WAS IT? SOME MANNER OF DISTURBANCE ON THE ASTRAL PLANE... SOME ENTITY TRYING TO FORCE ITS WAY INTO THE PHYSICAL WORLD!

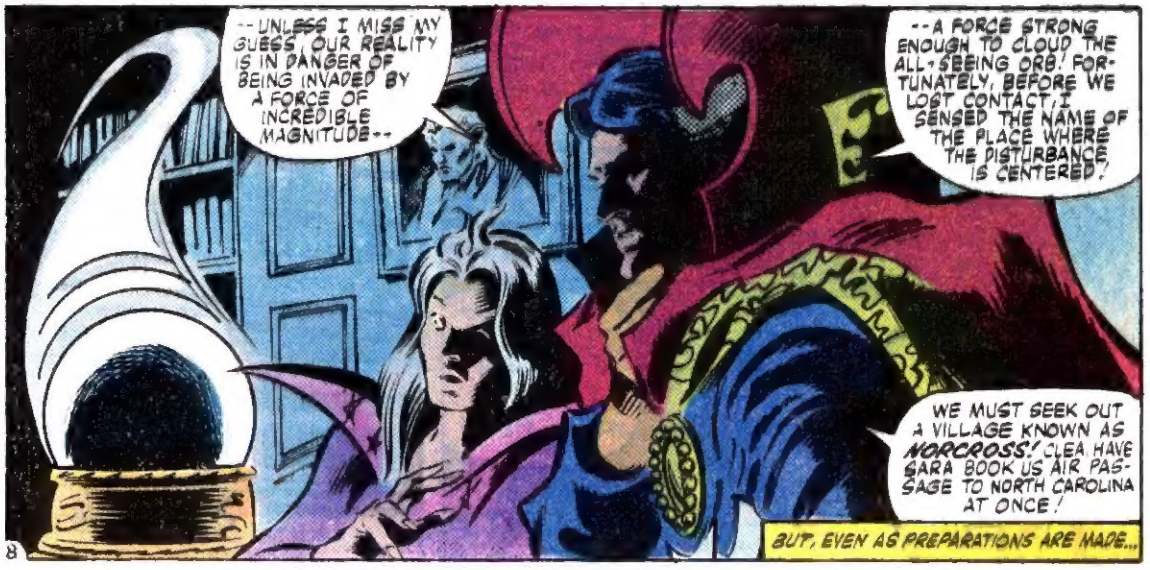

SUCH AN ACTION CAN BODE NO GOOD! COME, WE MUST CONSULT THE ALL-SEEING ORB OF AGAMOTTO!
EVEN AS THEY ENTER THE CHAMBER, THE CRYSTAL ORB BEGINS TO REACT TO THEIR QUESTING MINDS, FILLING THE ROOM WITH A COOL, WHITE LIGHT.

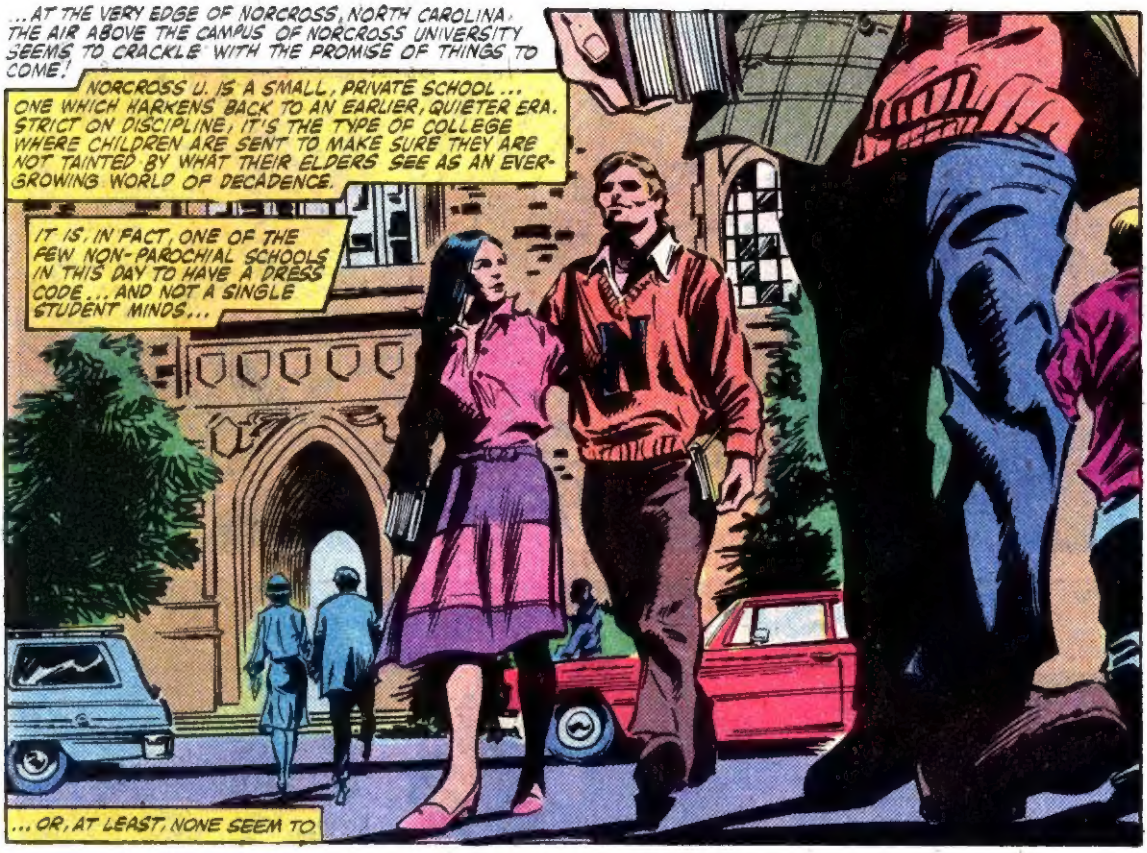

SLOWLY, THE GLOW FADES TO BE REPLACED WITH A SMALL SIMULACRUM OF THE EARTH.
STEPHEN, WHAT IS THAT DARK AREA SETTLING OVER THE GLOBE?
A WARNING OF SORTS...

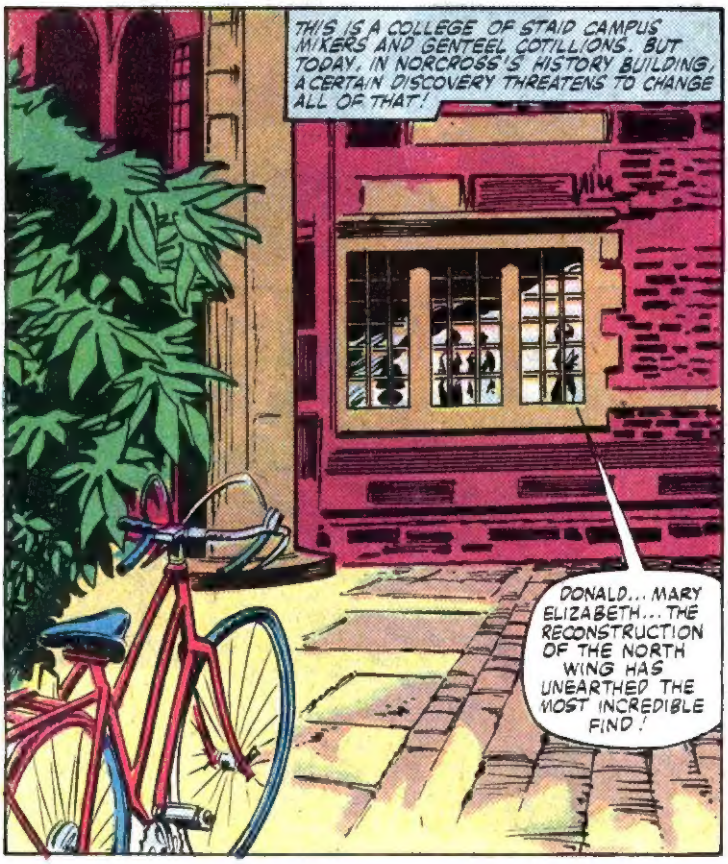
"AND THAT GLOWING AREA -- CENTERED IN THE CAROLINAS -- IS THE FOCUS OF THE DISTURBANCE! WE MUST INVESTIGATE FURTHER.


WITH THE FLOWING MOVEMENTS OF A TRUE MASTER, DR. STRANGE'S HANDS MAKE A SUBTLE PASS OVER THE GLOWING ORB, AND THE SCENE CHANGES...
THERE! THE DISRUPTION IS COMING FROM THAT SMALL TOWN ON THE CAROLINA BORDER!


BUT THEN, BEFORE THE SORCERER CAN PIN DOWN THE EXACT LOCATION OF THE SUPERNATURAL FORCE--
--THE ORB IS SUDDENLY FLOODED WITH AN INKY BLACKNESS OBLITERATING ALL IMAGES... DISGUISING ALL ACTIONS...
...AND TEMPORARILY PLUNGING THE ENTIRE CHAMBER INTO A DARKNESS DEEPER THAN THAT OF THE BLACKEST NIGHT!
BY THE VISHANTI!

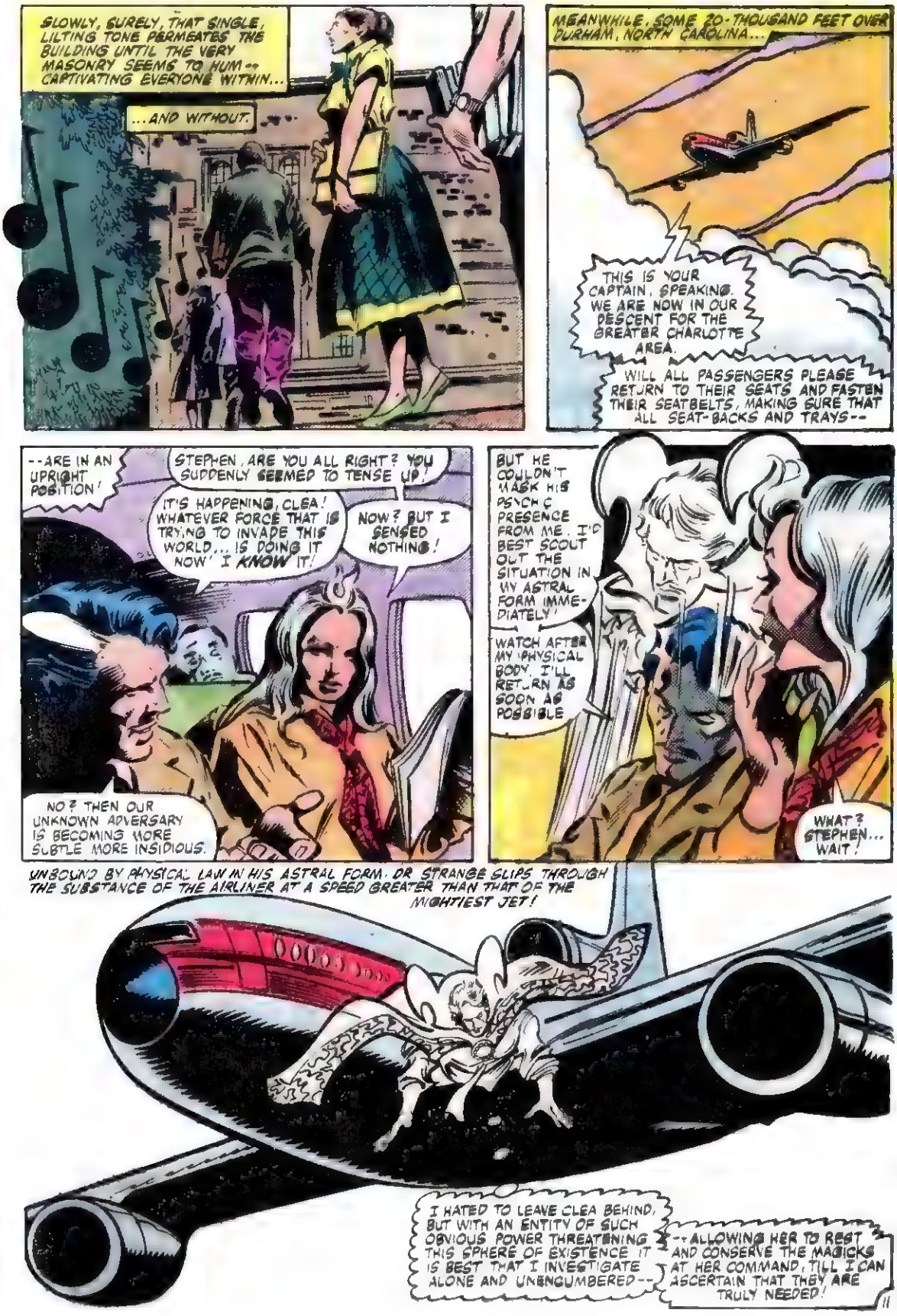

--UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS, OUR REALITY IS IN DANGER OF BEING INVADED BY A FORCE OF INCREDIBLE MAGNITUDE--
--A FORCE STRONG ENOUGH TO CLOUD THE ALL-SEEING ORB! FORTUNATELY, BEFORE WE LOST CONTACT, I SENSED THE NAME OF THE PLACE WHERE THE DISTURBANCE IS CENTERED.
WE MUST SEEK OUT A VILLAGE KNOWN AS NORCROSS! CLEA HAVE SARA BOOK US AIR PASSAGE TO NORTH CAROLINA AT ONCE!
BUT, EVEN AS PREPARATIONS ARE MADE...


...AT THE VERY EDGE OF NORCROSS, NORTH CAROLINA. THE AIR ABOVE THE CAMPUS OF NORCROSS UNIVERSITY SEEMS TO CRACKLE WITH THE PROMISE OF THINGS TO COME!
NORCROSS U. IS A SMALL, PRIVATE SCHOOL... ONE WHICH HARKENS BACK TO AN EARLIER, QUIETER ERA. STRICT ON DISCIPLINE, IT'S THE TYPE OF COLLEGE WHERE CHILDREN ARE SENT TO MAKE SURE THEY ARE NOT TAINTED BY WHAT THEIR ELDERS SEE AS AN EVER-GROWING WORLD OF DECADENCE.
IT IS, IN FACT, ONE OF THE FEW NON-PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS IN THIS DAY TO HAVE A DRESS CODE... AND NOT A SINGLE STUDENT MINDS...
...OR, AT LEAST, NONE SEEM TO


THIS IS A COLLEGE OF STAID CAMPUS MIXERS AND GENTEEL COTILLIONS. BUT TODAY, IN NORCROSS'S HISTORY BUILDING, A CERTAIN DISCOVERY THREATENS TO CHANGE ALL OF THAT!
DONALD... MARY ELIZABETH... THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE NORTH WING HAS UNEARTHED THE MOST INCREDIBLE FIND!

SO YOU SAID EARLIER, MISS WELLESLEY. BUT... I'M STILL CONFUSED. JUST WHY DID YOU WANT MARY AND ME HERE? I MEAN, WE'RE HONORED, BUT--!
THAT'S PRECISELY IT, DONALD! YOU AND MARY ELIZABETH ARE MY TOP HONOR STUDENTS!
YOU ARE THE LEADERS OF THE STUDENT BODY... THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW! IT'S ONLY FITTING THAT YOU BE ON HAND FOR THE OPENING OF DR. JAMES NORCROSS'S OWN SEA CHEST!
AS A MATTER OF FACT, I ALMOST FELT COMPELLED TO CALL YOU HERE!

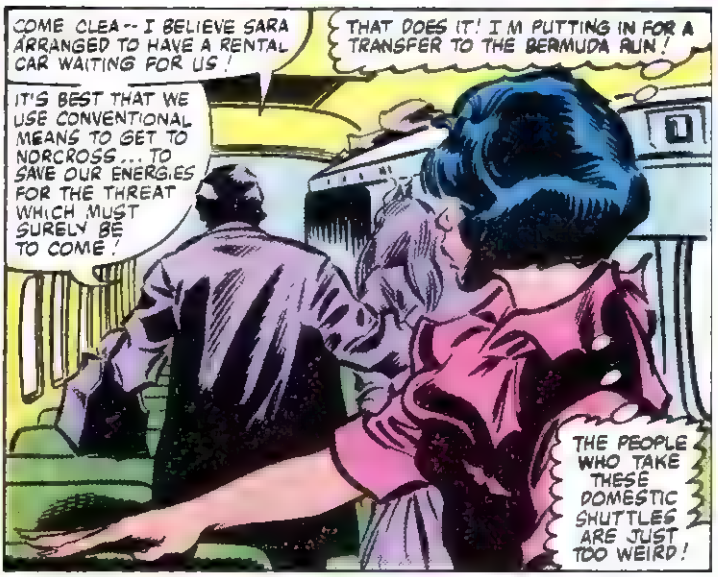
THE CHEST BELONGED TO THE SCHOOL'S FOUNDER? GOLLY!
JUST THINK MARY ELIZABETH-- WE'RE PROBABLY THE FIRST PEOPLE TO SEE THIS TRUNK'S CONTENTS IN NEARLY A CENTURY.
OH AT LEAST DONALD!
GRACIOUS ME LOOK. ALL OF DR NORCROSS'S OLD JOURNALS ARE IN HERE! AND... WHAT'S THIS ?!
WHY, IT'S SOME SORT OF TIBETAN TEMPLE BELL!
TIBETAN WHAT MISS WELLESLEY?
TEMPLE BELL, DONALD. DR NORCROSS MUST HAVE ACQUIRED IT DURING HIS TRIPS IN THE ORIENT. YOU'LL NOTE THAT IT HAS NO CLAPPER.
THEN HOW IS IT RUNG?
WELL, AS I RECALL FROM MY READINGS, YOU STRIKE THE EDGE OF THE BELL WITH A WOODEN MALLET. LIKE THIS ONE--
--AND THEN YOU RUN THE MALLET AROUND THE EDGE OF THE BELL'S MOUTH TO MAINTAIN THE TONE. WOULD YOU LIKE TO TRY IT?
WOULD I?
OH... I MEAN, YES MISS WELLESLEY.
TIMIDLY, THE YOUNG HONOR STUDENT STRIKES THE BELL...
--RUBBING THE MALLET AROUND ITS EDGE FASTER AND FASTER... THE VOLUME OF THE BELL'S TONE GROWING EVER GREATER.
OH, THAT SOUND IS... IT'S...
...BEAUTIFUL!

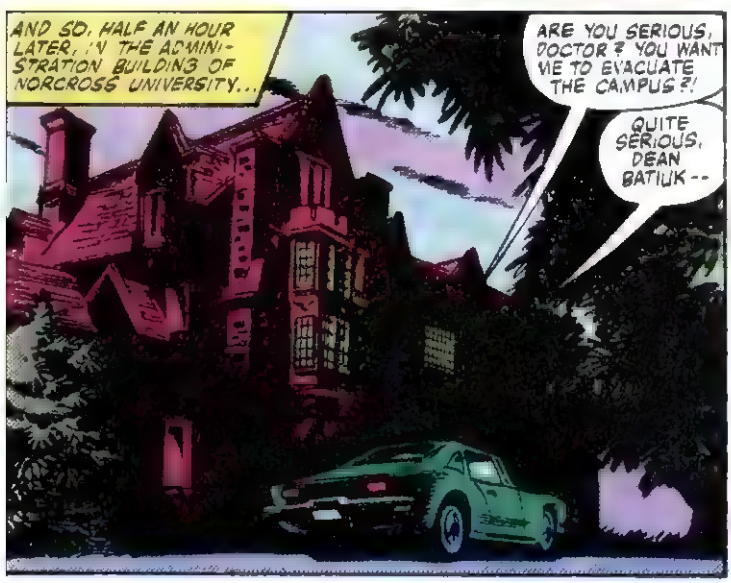

SLOWLY, SURELY, THAT SINGLE, LILTING TONE PERMEATES THE BUILDING UNTIL THE VERY MASONRY SEEMS TO HUM -- CAPTIVATING EVERYONE WITHIN...
...AND WITHOUT.
MEANWHILE, SOME 20-THOUSAND FEET OVER DURHAM, NORTH CAROLINA...
THIS IS YOUR CAPTAIN, SPEAKING. WE ARE NOW IN OUR DESCENT FOR THE GREATER CHARLOTTE AREA.
WILL ALL PASSENGERS PLEASE RETURN TO THEIR SEATS AND FASTEN THEIR SEATBELTS, MAKING SURE THAT ALL SEAT-BACKS AND TRAYS--
--ARE IN AN UPRIGHT POSITION!
STEPHEN, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU SUDDENLY SEEMED TO TENSE UP!
IT'S HAPPENING, CLEA! WHATEVER FORCE THAT IS TRYING TO INVADE THIS WORLD... IS DOING IT NOW! I KNOW IT!
NOW? BUT I SENSED NOTHING!
NO? THEN OUR UNKNOWN ADVERSARY IS BECOMING MORE SUBTLE MORE INSIDIOUS.
BUT HE COULDN'T MASK HIS PSYCHIC PRESENCE FROM ME. I'D BEST SCOUT OUT THE SITUATION IN MY ASTRAL FORM IMMEDIATELY!
WATCH AFTER MY PHYSICAL BODY. I'LL RETURN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
WHAT? STEPHEN... WAIT!
UNBOUND BY PHYSICAL LAW IN HIS ASTRAL FORM, DR STRANGE SLIPS THROUGH THE SUBSTANCE OF THE AIRLINER AT A SPEED GREATER THAN THAT OF THE MIGHTIEST JET!
I HATED TO LEAVE CLEA BEHIND, BUT WITH AN ENTITY OF SUCH OBVIOUS POWER THREATENING THIS SPHERE OF EXISTENCE IT IS BEST THAT I INVESTIGATE ALONE AND UNENCUMBERED--
--ALLOWING HER TO REST AND CONSERVE THE MAGICKS AT HER COMMAND, TILL I CAN ASCERTAIN THAT THEY ARE TRULY NEEDED!

WITHIN SECONDS HE IS OVER THE TOWN OF NORCROSS, AND THEN...
THERE ARE ETHEREAL VIBRATIONS COMING FROM THAT SMALL COLLEGE ON THE TOWN'S OUTSKIRTS...
...THAT IS WHERE I SHALL FIND MY ANSWERS!
DROPPING DOWN TO GROUND LEVEL, STRANGE'S WRAITH-LIKE FORM--INVISIBLE TO MORTAL EYES--WAFTS THROUGH THE CAMPUS...
MY ENCHANTED AMULET IS DETECTING A WAVERING SUB-AURAL TONE.
IF I BUT FOLLOW IT, I SHALL FIND THE SOURCE OF THE DISTURBANCE!
EH? THE STUDENTS LEAVING THIS BUILDING SEEM TO BE OVERCOME BY SOME PSYCHIC TRAUMA... AND THE LIGHT OF MY AMULET CONFIRMS THAT THE VIBRATIONS ARE ORIGINATING WITHIN!
IT WOULD APPEAR THAT I HAVE ARRIVED JUST IN TIME!
IF I CAN CONFRONT THE FORCE UNKNOWN -- TAKE IT BY SURPRISE WITH MY ASTRAL FORM --
-- PERHAPS I CAN WEAKEN ITS DEADLY HOLD ON REALITY UNTIL I CAN PHYSICALLY ARRIVE WITH CLEA!
BUT...
ARGH! SOME MYSTIC FORCE FIELD SURROUNDS THE BUILDING, PREVENTING MY ASTRAL SELF FROM ENTERING!
MY UNKNOWN FOE MUST BE EVEN MORE POWERFUL THAN I FEARED, TO ERECT SUCH A BARRIER SO SOON!
I CAN DO NO MORE NOW. MY ASTRAL BODY IS TOO WEAK TO COUNTER THE ENCHANTMENTS AT WORK HERE
I MUST REJOIN MY PHYSICAL FORM AND RETURN HERE AS QUICKLY AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE.

MERE INSTANTS LATER, AT CHARLOTTE'S DOUGLAS MUNICIPAL AIRPORT...
REALLY, THERE'S NO NEED TO CALL A DOCTOR! MY FRIEND IS JUST... AH... ASLEEP.
ASLEEP?! SO SOUNDLY? I DON'T BELIEVE IT...
...WHY, THE MAN'S CATATONIC! HE'S OBVIOUSLY HAD A STROKE OR SOMETHING!
STEPHEN, THANK HOGGOTH, YOU'RE BACK!
HONESTLY, HE'S JUST A BIT HARD TO WAKE--

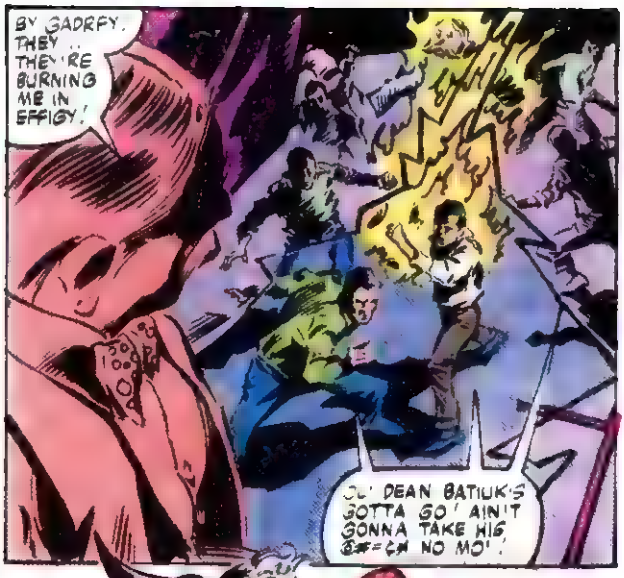
--YOU SEE? HE'S PERFECTLY ALL RIGHT!
OH! DID I NOD OFF AGAIN? TERRIBLY SORRY, BUT I HAVE BEEN KEEPING ODD HOURS LATELY!
I HOPE I DIDN'T DISTURB YOU!
N-NO.. NOT AT ALL!

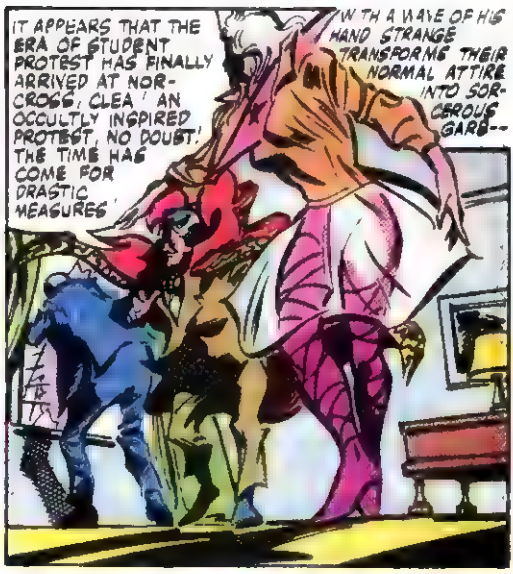

COME CLEA-- I BELIEVE SARA ARRANGED TO HAVE A RENTAL CAR WAITING FOR US!
IT'S BEST THAT WE USE CONVENTIONAL MEANS TO GET TO NORCROSS... TO SAVE OUR ENERGIES FOR THE THREAT WHICH MUST SURELY BE TO COME!
THAT DOES IT! I'M PUTTING IN FOR A TRANSFER TO THE BERMUDA RUN!
THE PEOPLE WHO TAKE THESE DOMESTIC SHUTTLES ARE JUST TOO WEIRD!


AND SO, HALF AN HOUR LATER, IN THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING OF NORCROSS UNIVERSITY...
ARE YOU SERIOUS, DOCTOR? YOU WANT ME TO EVACUATE THE CAMPUS?!
QUITE SERIOUS, DEAN BATIUK--

--IT'S THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION FOR THE COMMON SAFETY! I'M AFRAID THAT A GOODLY PORTION OF YOUR STUDENT BODY MAY ALREADY BE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF AN OUTSIDE AGENCY!
YOU MEAN... THE COMMUNISTS?! HERE?!

UH... NO, SIR. THE INFLUENCE I SPEAK OF IS NOT OF THIS EARTH. YOU SEE, I'VE REASON TO SUSPECT THAT AN ENTITY, OR ENTITIES, OF GREAT SUPER-NATURAL POWER HAS TAKEN OVER YOUR HISTORY BUILDING.
DO YOU EXPECT ME TO JUST SIT HERE AND ACCEPT YOUR STORY? EGAD, MAN -- I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT YOU WERE A MAN OF SCIENCE!.
NO LEARNED MAN COULD POSSIBLY BE EXPECTED TO BELIEVE THAT MUMBO-JUMBO!
"THERE ARE MORE THINGS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH, HORATIO, THAN ARE DREAMT OF IN YOUR PHILOSOPHY." -- HAMLET, ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE
HURUMPH! A WORKING KNOWLEDGE OF SHAKE-SPEARE IS HARDLY ENOUGH TO CONVINCE ME THAT SOME MAGIC BOOGEY MAN HAS OCCUPIED ONE OF OUR BUILDINGS!
OCCUPIED MAY NOT BE THE PROPER TERM, SIR! UNTIL MY ASSISTANT AND I CAN INVESTIGATE WE CAN'T BE SURE WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST...!
...BUT IT IS UNDOUBTEDLY DANGEROUS TO YOUR STUDENTS!
BAH! I NEVER HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT MY STUDENTS! THEY'RE ALL GOOD, DECENT YOUNG PEOPLE -- THEY CAN HANDLE ANYTHING!
AND DO YOU KNOW WHY? DISCIPLINE ...THAT'S WHY! RESPECT FOR ORDER AND AUTHORITY IS THE VERY FOUNDATION OF LEARNING AT NORCROSS!
WHY IN ALL MY YEARS AT THIS INSTITUTION, THERE HAS NEVER BEEN SO MUCH AS A SINGLE...
KERASH
...DEMONSTRATION.


BY GADRFY, THEY... THEY'RE BURNING ME IN EFFIGY!
OL' DEAN BATIUK'S GOTTA GO! AIN'T GONNA TAKE HIS BS=CM NO MO'!

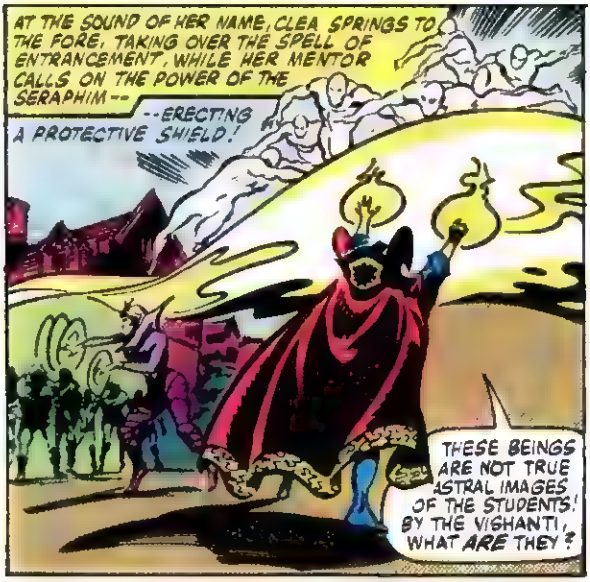

IT APPEARS THAT THE ERA OF STUDENT PROTEST HAS FINALLY ARRIVED AT NORCROSS, CLEA! AN OCCULTLY INSPIRED PROTEST, NO DOUBT! THE TIME HAS COME FOR DRASTIC MEASURES!
WITH A WAVE OF HIS HAND STRANGE TRANSFORMS THEIR NORMAL ATTIRE INTO SORCEROUS GARB--

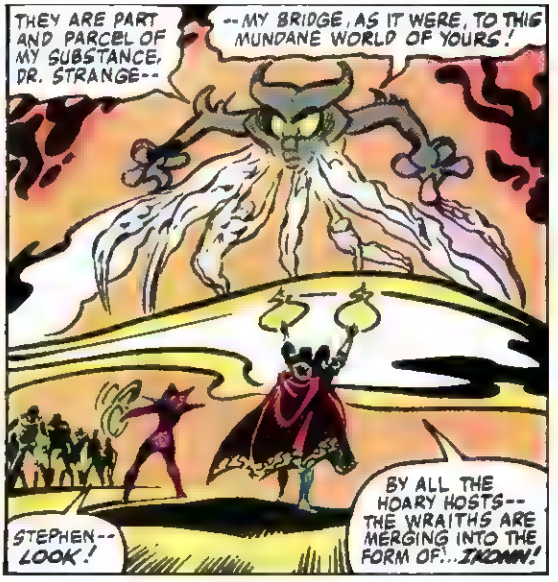
--AND THEN...
BE ON YOUR GUARD CLEA--I'M FLYING US INTO THE MIDST OF THE DEMONSTRATION I DON'T KNOW WHAT REACTION OUR APPEARANCE WILL GARNER BUT WE MUST BE PREPARED FOR ANYTHING!
ACTIVATED BY H.S VERY THOUGHTS, DR. STRANGE'S CLOAK OF LEVITATION CARRIES HIM AND HIS DISCIPLE HIGH OUT OVER THE CROWD.
WHAT ON EARTH?!

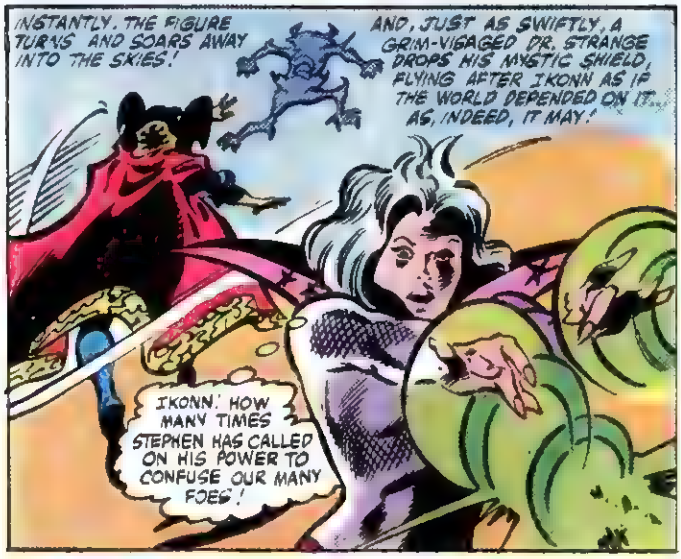
AND WHEN THEY TOUCH DOWN...
PIGS OFF CAMPUS!
INCREDIBLE! WE'RE BEING ATTACKED WITH BRICKBATS AND SIXTIES RHETORIC!

IT'S AS IF MY UNKNOWN OPPONENT HAS BROUGHT THESE CHILDREN OUT OF A STATE OF GENERAL LETHARGY AND UNLEASHED ALL OF THEIR SUPPRESSED DESIRES!
I MUST PUT AN END TO THEIR VIOLENCE BEFORE SOMEONE IS INJURED!
BOLTS OF BEDEVILMENT SWEEP PAST THEIR EYES, AS THE MISTS OF MORPHEUS SOFTEN THEIR CRIES!

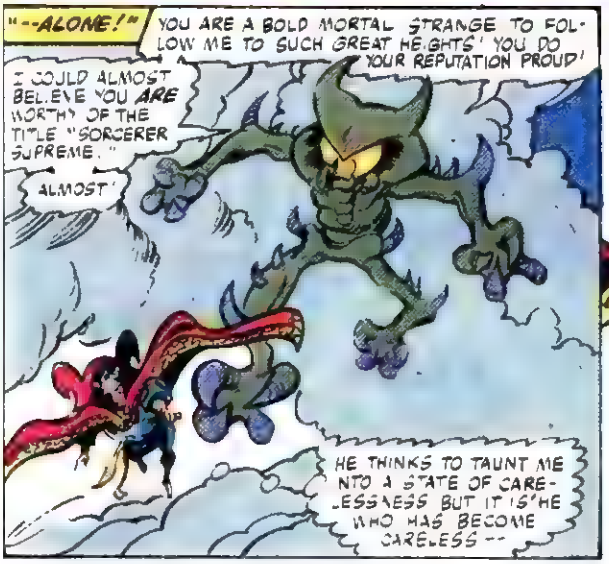
YOU'LL NOT STOP US THAT WAY, FOOL!
WHAT THE PHYSICAL CANNOT DO, THE ASTRAL CAN!
BY ODHTUR! WE'RE BESEIGED BY PSYCHIC WRAITHS!
CLEA!


AT THE SOUND OF HER NAME, CLEA SPRINGS TO THE FORE, TAKING OVER THE SPELL OF ENTRANCEMENT, WHILE HER MENTOR CALLS ON THE POWER OF THE SERAPHIM --
--ERECTING A PROTECTIVE SHIELD!
THESE BEINGS ARE NOT TRUE ASTRAL IMAGES OF THE STUDENTS! BY THE VISHANTI, WHAT ARE THEY?

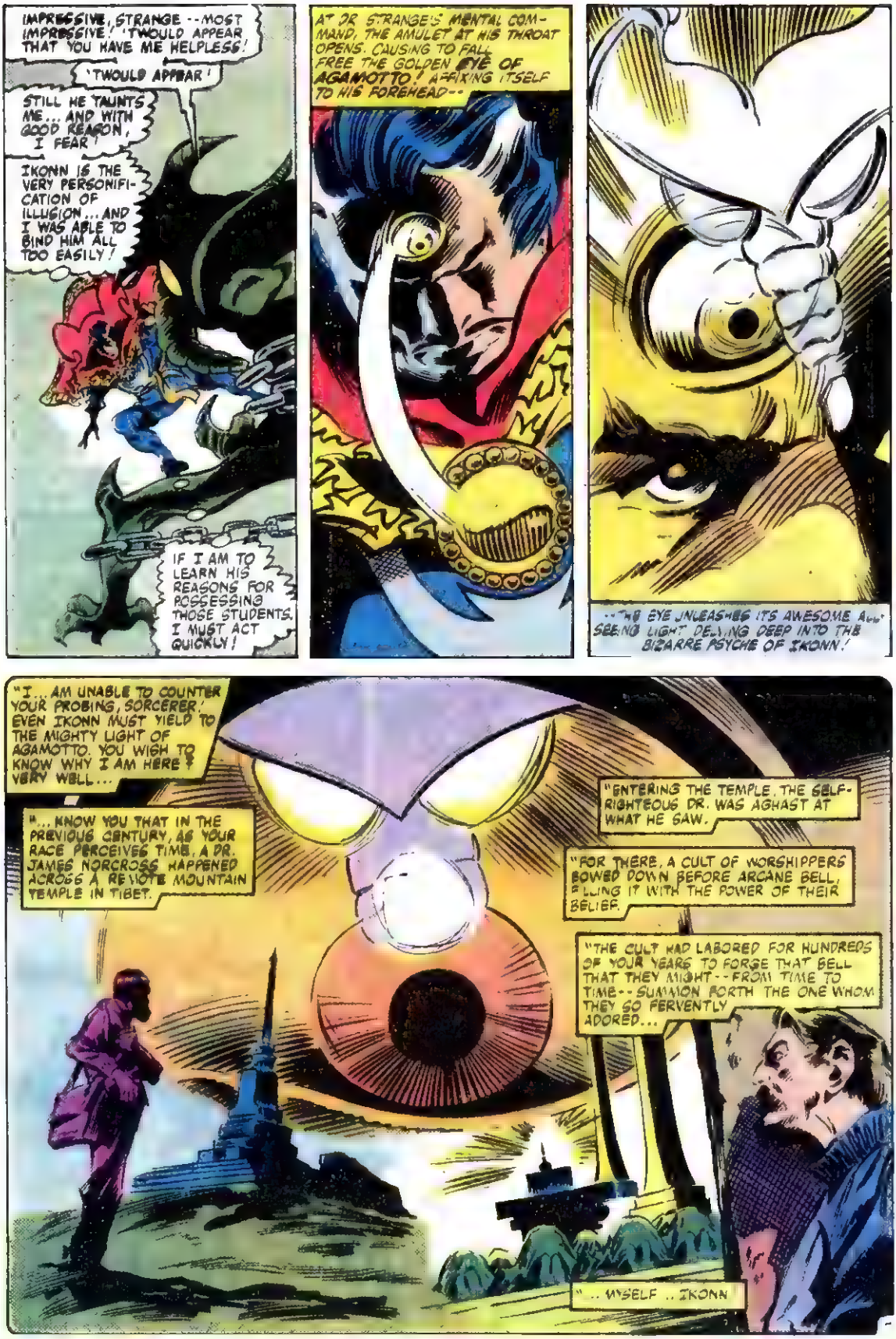

THEY ARE PART AND PARCEL OF MY SUBSTANCE, DR. STRANGE--
--MY BRIDGE, AS IT WERE, TO THIS MUNDANE WORLD OF YOURS!
STEPHEN-- LOOK!
BY ALL THE HOARY HOSTS-- THE WRAITHS ARE MERGING INTO THE FORM OF... IKONN!


INSTANTLY, THE FIGURE TURNS AND SOARS AWAY INTO THE SKIES!
AND, JUST AS SWIFTLY, A GRIM-VISAGED DR. STRANGE DROPS HIS MYSTIC SHIELD, FLYING AFTER IKONN AS IF THE WORLD DEPENDED ON IT... AS, INDEED, IT MAY!
IKONN! HOW MANY TIMES STEPHEN HAS CALLED ON HIS POWER TO CONFUSE OUR MANY FOES!

IF HE IS IS CROSSING OVER INTO THIS PLANE OF EXISTENCE, THE VERY FABRIC OF REALITY MAY BE THREATENED!
WOULD THAT I COULD FLY TO STEPHEN'S SIDE AND HELP HIM... BUT, NO! I MUST KEEP THESE INNOCENTS ENTRANCED. ANY BATTLE WITH IKONN WILL HAVE TO BE WAGED BY MY BELOVED--

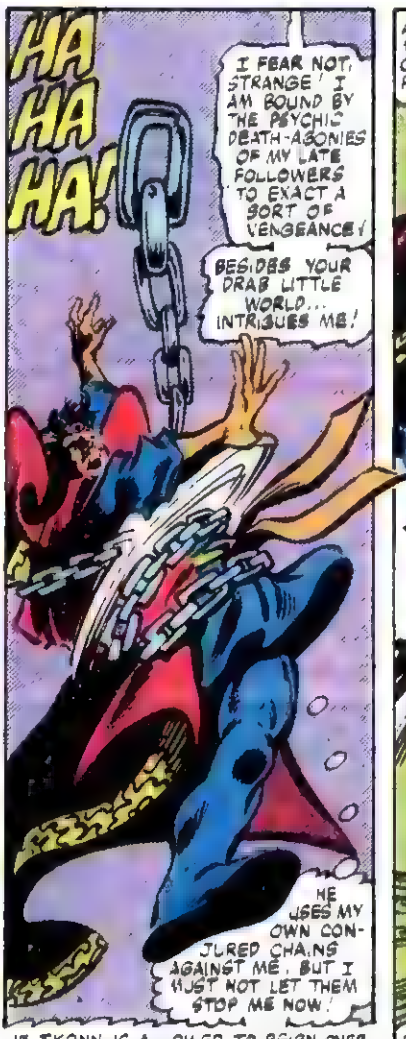

"--ALONE!"
YOU ARE A BOLD MORTAL STRANGE TO FOLLOW ME TO SUCH GREAT HEIGHTS! YOU DO YOUR REPUTATION PROUD!
I COULD ALMOST BELIEVE YOU ARE WORTHY OF THE TITLE "SORCERER SUPREME."
ALMOST!
HE THINKS TO TAUNT ME INTO A STATE OF CARELESSNESS BUT IT IS HE WHO HAS BECOME CARELESS --

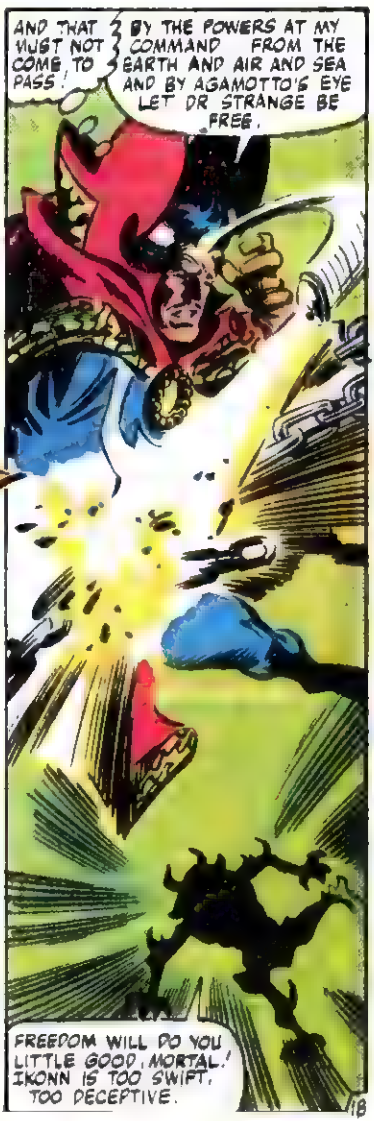
--AND MADE OF HIMSELF SUCH AN EASY TARGET!
BY THE DEMONS OF DENAK AND BY HOGGOTH'S GRIM CLAN LET MY FOE BE ENSNARED BY THE CHAINS OF KRAKKAN!


IMPRESSIVE, STRANGE--MOST IMPRESSIVE! 'TWOULD APPEAR THAT YOU HAVE ME HELPLESS!
'TWOULD APPEAR!
STILL HE TAUNTS ME... AND WITH GOOD REASON, I FEAR!
IKONN IS THE VERY PERSONIFICATION OF ILLUSION... AND I WAS ABLE TO BIND HIM ALL TOO EASILY!
IF I AM TO LEARN HIS REASONS FOR POSSESSING THOSE STUDENTS, I MUST ACT QUICKLY!
AT DR. STRANGE'S MENTAL COMMAND, THE AMULET AT HIS THROAT OPENS, CAUSING TO FALL FREE THE GOLDEN EYE OF AGAMOTTO! AFFIXING ITSELF TO HIS FOREHEAD--
..THE EYE UNLEASHES ITS AWESOME ALL-SEEING LIGHT, DELVING DEEP INTO THE BIZARRE PSYCHE OF IKONN!
"I... AM UNABLE TO COUNTER YOUR PROBING, SORCERER! EVEN IKONN MUST YIELD TO THE MIGHTY LIGHT OF AGAMOTTO. YOU WISH TO KNOW WHY I AM HERE? VERY WELL...
"... KNOW YOU THAT IN THE PREVIOUS CENTURY, AS YOUR RACE PERCEIVES TIME, A DR. JAMES NORCROSS HAPPENED ACROSS A REMOTE MOUNTAIN TEMPLE IN TIBET.
"ENTERING THE TEMPLE, THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS DR. WAS AGHAST AT WHAT HE SAW.
"FOR THERE, A CULT OF WORSHIPPERS BOWED DOWN BEFORE ARCANE BELL, FILLING IT WITH THE POWER OF THEIR BELIEF.
"THE CULT HAD LABORED FOR HUNDREDS OF YOUR YEARS TO FORGE THAT BELL THAT THEY MIGHT--FROM TIME TO TIME--SUMMON FORTH THE ONE WHOM THEY SO FERVENTLY ADORED...
"... MYSELF .. IKONN

"WHATEVER BELIEFS NORCROSS HELD, HAD BEEN TAINTED BY THAT MOST AWFUL OF HATREDS -- INTOLERANCE! HE SAW THE BELL ONLY AS A SYMBOL OF IDOLATROUS HEATHENISM -- NOT AS THE MYSTIC ARTIFACT IT TRULY WAS.
"AND SO, HE STOLE IT, BREAKING ONE OF THE TENETS OF HIS OWN RELIGION!
"AND IN ORDER TO COVER HIS ESCAPE, NORCROSS FURTHER RESORTED TO MURDER. THUS WAS THE BELL OF IKONN SPIRITED AWAY FROM ITS OWNERS!"

BUT NOW THE BELL HAS AT LAST BEEN RUNG -- RUNG BY THE FAITHFUL OF THE VERY SCHOOL WHICH NORCROSS FOUNDED UPON HIS RETURN TO THIS LAND -- BRINGING ME INTO THIS REALITY!
AND THE LONGER THE BELL TOLLS, THE MIGHTIER MY HOLD ON THIS MORTAL PLANE BECOMES!
BY THE SEVEN SONS OF CINNIBUS! HE HAS NOT ONLY BROKEN FREE OF AGAMOTTO'S MYSTIC PROBE --
-- BUT HE HAS RENT THE CHAINS OF KRAKKAN AGUNDER! HIS POWER IS INCREASING BY THE SECOND! I MUST STOP HIM BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!
HOLD IKONN! SURELY, SUCH A MIGHTY ENTITY AS YOURSELF IS BEYOND THE PETTY PASSION OF REVENGE!

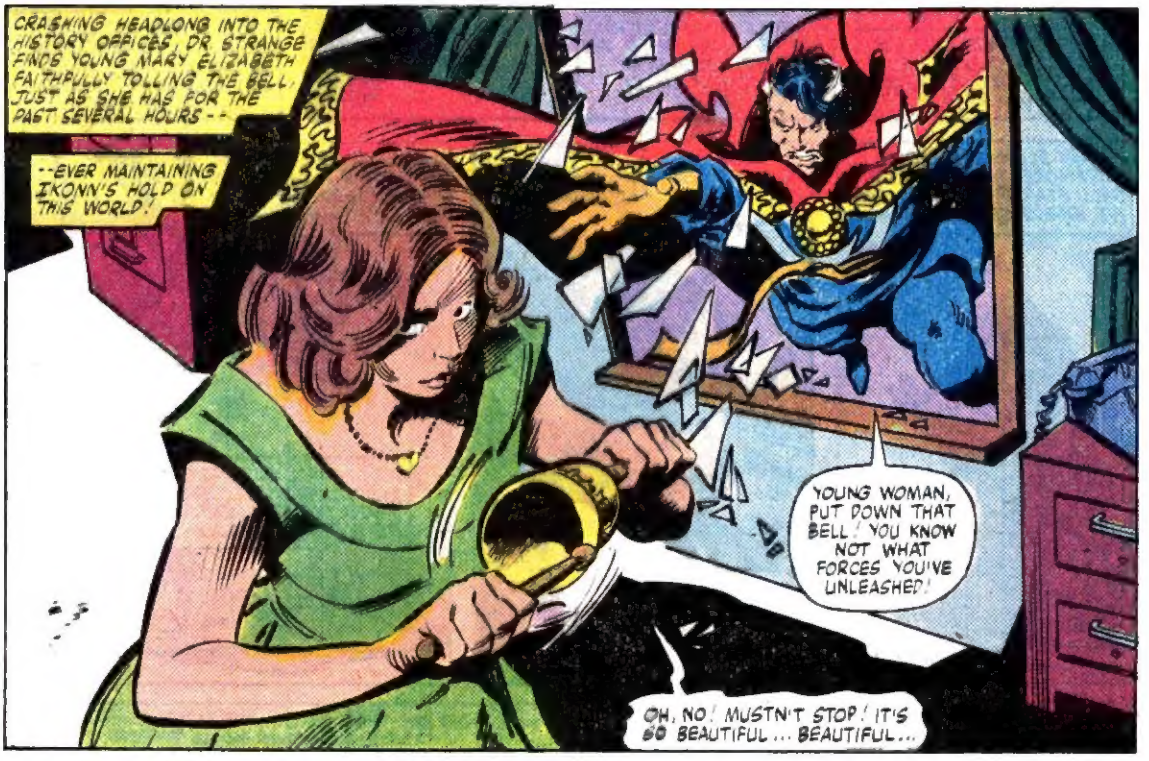

HA HA HA!
I FEAR NOT, STRANGE! I AM BOUND BY THE PSYCHIC DEATH-AGONIES OF MY LATE FOLLOWERS TO EXACT A SORT OF VENGEANCE!
BESIDES YOUR DRAB LITTLE WORLD... INTRIGUES ME!
HE USES MY OWN CONJURED CHAINS AGAINST ME. BUT I MUST NOT LET THEM STOP ME NOW!

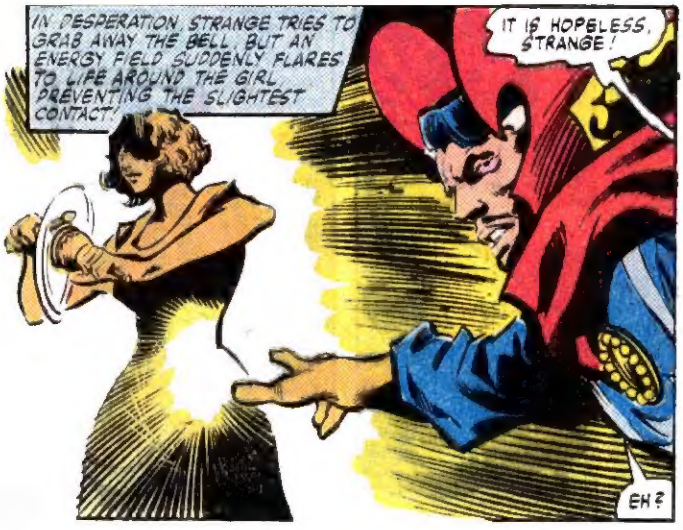

AND THAT MUST NOT COME TO PASS!
BY THE POWERS AT MY COMMAND FROM THE EARTH AND AIR AND SEA AND BY AGAMOTTO'S EYE LET DR STRANGE BE FREE.
FREEDOM WILL DO YOU LITTLE GOOD, MORTAL! IKONN IS TOO SWIFT, TOO DECEPTIVE.

IF IKONN IS ALLOWED TO REIGN OVER THE WORLD, THEN ILLUSION WOULD BECOME AS FACT AND EARTH'S REALITY WOULD CRUMBLE INTO EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL CHAOS!

MEANWHILE, THOUSANDS OF FEET BELOW...
I WISH STEPHEN WOULD RETURN! IT IS BECOMING MORE AND MORE DIFFICULT TO KEEP THESE STUDENTS ENTRANCED!
EVEN WITH HIS POSSESSING WRAITHS GONE FROM THEIR BODIES, IKONN STILL HAS SOME SORT OF HOLD OVER THEM!
THEY STRUGGLE AGAINST ME, AND I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN HOLD THEM!
BUT, AT THAT MOMENT, AT THE FAR END OF THE TINY CAMPUS...
YOU ARE PERSISTENT, STRANGE, BUT YOU PURSUE ME IN VAIN. EVEN NOW, MY POWER OVER THIS REALM IS ALMOST COMPLETE. OBSERVE...
... PHYSICAL LAWS NOW BEND AT MY SLIGHTEST THOUGHT, AND WHIM BECOMES DEED! THIS IS THE LEGACY JAMES NORCROSS HAS LEFT HIS WORLD!
THE TOLL OF THE BELL HAS SOUNDED, STRANGE... AND THE TOLL IS ALL!
BY THE SHADES OF THE SERAPHIM, HE HAS TURNED THIS CHIMNEY INTO A LIVING HAND!
AND THIS IS NO MERE ILLUSION... IT IS HORRIBLY REAL!
MY OWN POWER OVER THE PHYSICAL IS LIMITED UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT IF IKONN'S PRESENCE IS AFFECTING REALITY ENOUGH--!
PRAISE THE VISHANTI, IT WORKED!
I WAS ABLE TO BREAK THE STONEY GRIP WITH THE DISKS OF DENAK, YET, IF THAT IS POSSIBLE--

--THEN THE VERY FABRIC OF TIME AND SPACE MUST BE CLOSE TO UNRAVELING!
AHEAD STANDS THE HISTORY BUILDING... THAT FROM WHICH IKONN'S DISRUPTIVE POWER FLOWS! I WAS UNABLE TO ENTER IT IN ASTRAL FORM, BUT MAYHAP I CAN STILL EFFECT AN ENTRANCE IN A MORE PHYSICAL MANNER!
IF NOT, THEN ALL MAY BE LOST!


CRASHING HEADLONG INTO THE HISTORY OFFICES, DR STRANGE FINDS YOUNG MARY ELIZABETH FAITHFULLY TOLLING THE BELL, JUST AS SHE HAS FOR THE PAST SEVERAL HOURS--
--EVER MAINTAINING IKONN'S HOLD ON THIS WORLD!
YOUNG WOMAN, PUT DOWN THAT BELL! YOU KNOW NOT WHAT FORCES YOU'VE UNLEASHED!
OH, NO! MUSTN'T STOP! IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL... BEAUTIFUL...


IN DESPERATION, STRANGE TRIES TO GRAB AWAY THE BELL, BUT AN ENERGY FIELD SUDDENLY FLARES TO LIFE AROUND THE GIRL, PREVENTING THE SLIGHTEST CONTACT!
IT IS HOPELESS, STRANGE!
EH?

ANOTHER FEW MOMENTS, AND I WILL BE AS ONE WITH YOUR DIMENSION! YOU CANNOT STOP THE PROCESS!
NO, NOTHING IS EVER HOPELESS! I CAN STILL THWART YOU, IKONN...

...IT'S JUST A MATTER OF TIME!
LINKING HIS HANDS TOGETHER, DR. STRANGE CLEARS HIS MIND OF ALL BUT A SINGLE THOUGHT--
--AND AS HE DOES, BEHIND THE BELL-LIKE FIELD, THE WOMAN'S MOVEMENTS BEGIN TO GRADUALLY SLOW.
EH? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
STRANGE DOES NOT REPLY. SILENTLY, HE CONCENTRATES ON THE ONE SPELL WHICH MAY NOW SAVE A WORLD. AND AS HE DOES--
--MARY ELIZABETH SLOWS EVEN MORE. THE TONE OF THE BELL STARTS TO FALL...AND THE SHIELD QUIVERS.
MY HOLD ON THIS WORLD... IT'S SLIPPING!
STRANGE! YOU... YOU'RE SLOWING DOWN TIME WITHIN THE GIRL'S PROXIMITY!
A GRIM SMILE CROSSES STRANGE'S FACE. IKONN HAS GUESSED THE TRUTH... TOO LATE!
AS TIME ALL BUT STOPS FOR THE YOUNG WOMAN, SHE DROPS THE BELL, ENDING ITS ENTRANCING TOLL...
...AND BANISHING IKONN WHENCE HE CAME...
YOU HAVE HUMBLED ME STRANGE... AND YET, I HAVE NOT LOST! WE BOTH HAVE WON... BOTH! HA-HA-HA!
WHAT DOES HE MEAN? IS THIS ONE LAST TAUNT, OR SOMETHING MORE INSIDIOUS?
HAS HE CAUSED ANY PERMANENT DAMAGE IN THESE YOUNG MINDS?
OHHH!
HMM... THE LIGHT OF AGAMOTTO SHOWS NO ILL EFFECTS. I MUST PONDER THIS FOR A WHILE.
BUT FIRST, I'D BEST FIND CLEA AND RESTORE THE CAMPUS TO SOMETHING RESEMBLING NORMALCY!
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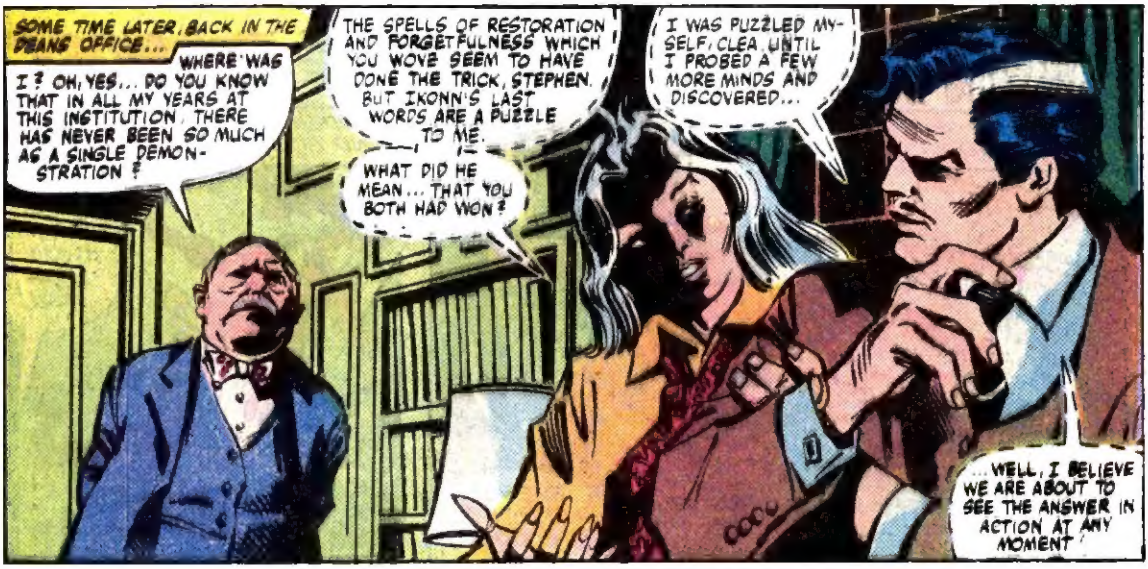
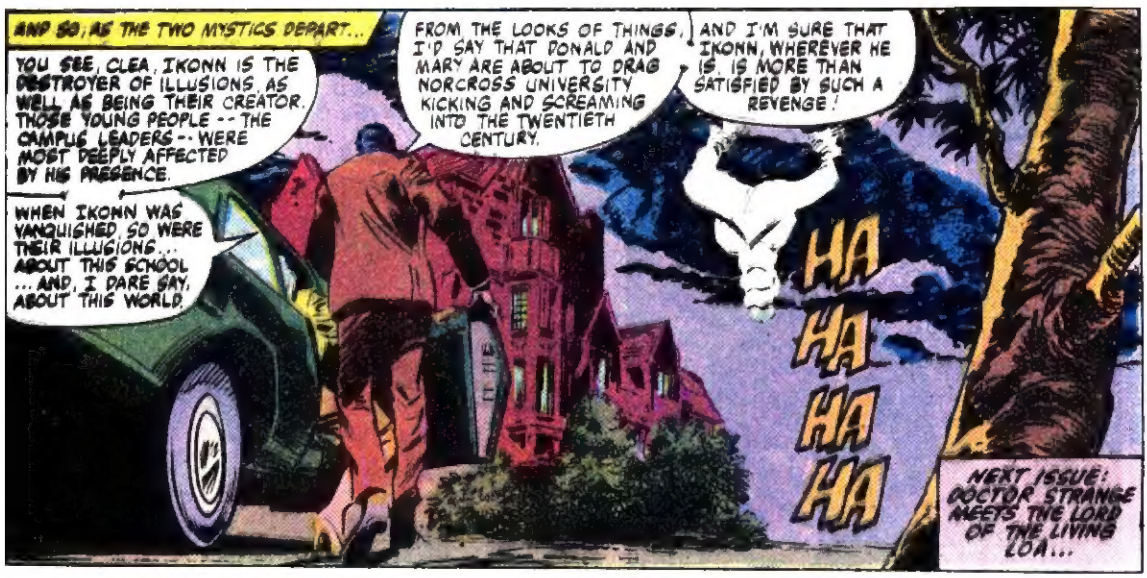

SOME TIME LATER, BACK IN THE DEANS OFFICE...
WHERE WAS I? OH, YES... DO YOU KNOW THAT IN ALL MY YEARS AT THIS INSTITUTION, THERE HAS NEVER BEEN SO MUCH AS A SINGLE DEMONSTRATION!
THE SPELLS OF RESTORATION AND FORGETFULNESS WHICH YOU WOVE SEEM TO HAVE DONE THE TRICK, STEPHEN. BUT IKONN'S LAST WORDS ARE A PUZZLE TO ME.
WHAT DID HE MEAN... THAT YOU BOTH HAD WON?
I WAS PUZZLED MYSELF, CLEA, UNTIL I PROBED A FEW MORE MINDS AND DISCOVERED...
...WELL, I BELIEVE WE ARE ABOUT TO SEE THE ANSWER IN ACTION AT ANY MOMENT!

INDEED, SUDDENLY THE DOOR IS FLUNG OPEN AND...
SORRY TO BARGE IN LIKE THIS DEAN, BUT THERE'S A FEW CHANGES THAT NEED TO BE MADE AROUND HERE!
WHAT?!
THAT'S RIGHT! WE REPRESENT THE AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR STUDENTS RIGHTS--AND WE'RE PREPARED TO GO TO COURT TO GET WHAT WE WANT!
BUT... BUT... BUT...

YEAH! LOOK, EVERY NORCROSS STUDENT IS AN ADULT CITIZEN, AND I SUBMIT THAT A DRESS CODE FOR SUCH INDIVIDUALS IS IDIOTIC!
AND ABOUT THE DORMS--!
WELL, DEAN, I SEE THAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE BUSY FOR SOME TIME, SO WE'LL BE TAKING OUR LEAVE!
GOOD LUCK!


AND SO, AS THE TWO MYSTICS DEPART...
YOU SEE, CLEA, IKONN IS THE DESTROYER OF ILLUSIONS, AS WELL AS BEING THEIR CREATOR. THOSE YOUNG PEOPLE -- THE CAMPUS LEADERS -- WERE MOST DEEPLY AFFECTED BY HIS PRESENCE.
WHEN IKONN WAS VANQUISHED, SO WERE THEIR ILLUSIONS... ABOUT THIS SCHOOL ...AND, I DARE SAY, ABOUT THIS WORLD.
FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS, I'D SAY THAT DONALD AND MARY ARE ABOUT TO DRAG NORCROSS UNIVERSITY KICKING AND SCREAMING INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.
AND I'M SURE THAT IKONN, WHEREVER HE IS, IS MORE THAN SATISFIED BY SUCH A REVENGE!
HA HA HA HA
NEXT ISSUE: DOCTOR STRANGE MEETS THE LORD OF THE LIVING LOA...